Flyin’ West Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

After slavery has been abolished, Miss Leah, Sophie, and Fannie all live on a farm in Nicodemus during the period of Jim Crow laws. Nicodemus is one of the rare towns inhabited by all black people at this time, and the women are bonded by a strong sense of pride in their independence. Minnie, another sister, is married to a black man named Frank, who has two white brothers, and whose dad has recently died. Frank is hoping to obtain a piece of his fathers inheritance, and his brothers want to prevent him from doing so. Frank and Minnie live in London, and Frank resents the life outside of the city, and is prejudiced toward black people that he feels are not accustomed to the “finer things” in life. The sisters are awaiting Minnie and Frank’s visit to Nicodemus from London. Sophie is also seeing a boy named Wil

2. What is the *intrusion*?

Frank loses his money in a gamble in town, presumably because he was drunk. After this, he abuses Minnie. Then, we learn that Minnie is pregnant. Later, Frank learns that he did not get a piece of inheritance, and he beats Minnie even more severely than before.

3. What is the *unique factor*?

Even though Frank is black, he acts as though he is a white man in the way he dresses and speaks, and shows resentment toward black people by calling them the n-word. Also, Minnie is pregnant, and Miss Leah believes that she is the only hope of continuing the family bloodline.

4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will Minnie be able to have her baby, or will Frank’s abusiveness kill Minnie and/or the baby? Also, if Minnie has the baby, will it be raised in Frank’s point of view or by the women in Nicodemus? Will Minnie choose life with Frank over life with her family?

5. Provide an illustration of the *two kinds of exposition* that the play has in it.

Open dialogue between the characters provides information about the characters to the audience and the characters. For example, we know the structure of the family and basic information about each character.

Only Minnie and Frank know of the abusive nature of Frank at the beginning of the play. However, this is revealed when Frank pushes Minnie on the ground after he gambles away his money.

6. Identify the most *theatrical moment* in the play and of what importance it seems to be.

The most theatrical moment of the play is when the sisters plot to kill Frank. Sophie goes after Frank in a shotgun, and Miss Leah plots to kill him with a poisonous pie. The single most theatrical moment is when Frank unknowingly takes a bite of the lethal pie, and begins to convulse and die.

7. List some of the *themes* of the play.

Economic obstacles that black people faced in post civil war America

The abuse of women by men

Sisterhood and female bonds

The power of friendship and family

8. What do the principal characters *want* and what are some *obstacles* that stand in the way of them getting what they want?

Sophie wants black people to be able to be free, but the townspeople consider this freedom with a different view than she does.

Miss Leah wants Minnie to remain in Nicodemus and raise her child to be proud of her black heritage, but Frank wants to raise the child in London and teach him to be ashamed of black people.

Minnie wants to have her baby, but the abuse of Frank endangers the health of the baby.

Frank wants his share of inheritance, but his white brothers refuse to give him any because they recent his color. Minnie is also still in love with Frank, and states that he wasn’t always abusive, but his current abusive habits stand in the way of a loving relationship.

9. Describe some possible *images* in the play and how does the *title* help us understand the play.

Minnie’s child is a symbol of African American culture and pride. The abuse by frank, which endangers the fate of the baby, is in part an effort to make her ashamed of her race. However, her sisters, who want to protect the baby, work to keep this pride and culture alive in Minnie through sisterhood.

10. Briefly define the *family relationships* that are examined in the play.

All of the women are sisters in every essence of the word. The strong love they have for each other saves Minnies life and the life of her baby. Also, Sophie and will end up getting married. A negative family relationship in the story is obviously the husband/wife relationship of Frank and Minnie.